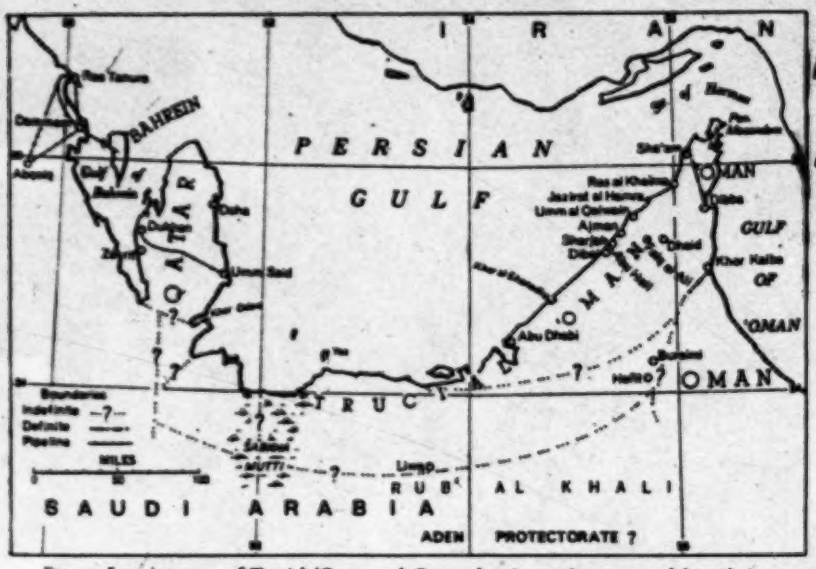


FIG. 1—Location map of Trucial 'Oman and Qatar, showing various reported boundaries.

number of cattle is small. Wells are far apart; many are brackish, and only a few have sufficient water for surface or subsurface irrigation. Thus the whole peninsula of Qatar contains only two or three struggling date gardens. Larger wells are reported below the foothills of the mountains of 'Oman, which explain the more extensive date gardens there (similar to those of the Batinah Coast, on the east side of the mountain range) and the cultivation of some cereals. The total population is small and largely migratory. Estimates range from 7000 to 25,000 for Qatar, and from 40,000 to 105,000 for the remainder of the coast, concentrated in the northeastern part; from the base of the Qatar peninsula to Abu Dhabi the coast is reported to be virtually empty of human beings today, except for a few Bedouins migrating from the inland wells of Liwa.[1]

Because of the scanty endowment of the land, occupations deriving revenue from the sea became dominant. The port of Sharjah was reported to send 350 boats to the pearl fishery and to have in addition about a hundred fishing boats.[2] Pearling is generally limited to a small but indented stretch of coast near this port, and receipts are believed to fluctuate substantially from year to year.[3] The growth of both fishing and pearling is assumed to be related to recent since name of the earlier observers commented much on them.

[1] W[ilfred] Thesiger: Across the Empty Quarter, *Geogr. Journ.*, Vol. 111, 1948, pp. 1–21; reference on p. 9.

[2] S. B. Miles: The Country and Tribes of the Persian Gulf (2 vols., London, 1919), Vol. 2, p. 442.

[3] Raymond O'Shea: The Sand Kings of Oman (London, 1947), p. 132.

2: O'Shea G-3 (1944-1945) 1947 MK4 Trucial Oman MK4



133 pearl boats, avoid these waters. It is here that the principal Oman pearl banks lie. The most important islands off the Trucial Coast are Bu Musa, which contains a red ochre mine; Tunb; Sir Bu Na'air; Yas, where there is an R.A.F. emergency landing ground; and Dalmah.

132 The climate is extremely severe in the summer months. From May to October, the combined heat and humidity are very trying to Europeans; temperatures of 115° F. and humidity of 98° are common. In the winter months, from November to February, it is pleasantly cool by day and cold at night, but frost is unknown; at this time the weather on the coast is frequently boisterous. Rainfall averages about 5 in. a year, and falls chiefly in mid-winter, when storms are extremely severe. On 30th November, 1944, the Indian Meteorological department at Sharjah recorded a rainfall of 1.75 in. within twenty minutes and a wind of 78 miles an hour.

162 Tribally and racially the people of the Trucial Coast are very mixed, Arabs, Persians, Baluchis, Hindus, and a large number of Arab slaves and their progeny forming the bulk of the population. The Bedouins, who some years ago were estimated to number 8,000, are mostly confined to the open desert, although they are now more amiably disposed to the settled tribes and townships than formerly; the largest of the Bedouin tribes in Oman is that of the Beni Qitab, whose ruler is the Sheikh Mahommed bin Ali. The Bedouins live chiefly by their livestock, although some nowadays take part in pearling and fishing during the season. In winter time, when there is a fine amount of herbage for their herds, they scatter and move from encampment to encampment, but in summer they congregate in large numbers around the more copious wells in the desert. The Jiri plain in the north and Bainumah in the west, are favourite places.

241 There is little agriculture in Trucial Oman. Dates can be grown in most places, although the Arabs are extremely conservative and are averse from attempting new projects. The only large-scale date plantations are at Falaj-al-Ali and Djaidh. Inland, west of the Shimailiyah mountains and the Sir Wadhi, some cereals, wheat, tobacco and *jowari* are grown, and vegetables can be raised by means

231 of well irrigation. Cows, donkeys, camels, goats and sheep are kept, and plenty of poultry, but little appears to be known of diseases of the latter, and in 1944 they died in large numbers. The normal food for cattle is fish and boiled date stones, and herbage when it can be found. Except for the famous stables of Sheikh

we all were sensible that behind the smiling mask lay a mind as keen and poised as the blade of his ceremonial sword.

When we left the palace, the sun was blazing from a cloudless sky and the creek shone like a mirror. We returned to the Khan Sahib's house to pack some refreshments, and then mounted the six camels which he had procured for us and began the eight-mile ride to his summer residence at the foot of the mountains. Although a comparatively short distance, the journey was a tiring one. Apart from a few scattered palm trees, there was no shade, and the sun, being in the meridian, was at its fiercest and beat down upon us mercilessly. The humidity was extremely trying, also: Frew thought it must have been about 80°. The perspiration streamed off our faces and seeped through our shirts. Our camels, also affected by the heat, lumbered along in leisurely fashion, which was not so uncomfortable as when they cantered. We passed several large date plantations, as shady and inviting as an English wood, and noisy with the cries of jays and parakeets. Brilliant-hued butterflies darted among the palm fronds, some of them measuring six inches across the wings.

Crossing a dried-up water course, or *wadhi*, we reached the foot of the hills. Of buff and pink sandstone, they sloped gradually for 300 feet, and were easily climbable for that distance. At that point they gave way to sheer cliffs of black and brown igneous rock, formidable with giant buttresses and massive boulders. Occasionally we glimpsed passes and crevices along the slopes which were honeycombed with caves. In these, the Khan Sahib informed us, the Shi'hou tribes lived. About 2,000 feet up, there were plateaux in the mountains, with small valleys where the tribesmen cultivated corn and sugar canes. We saw nothing of the Shi'hou, however, and after an hour's ride entered a low-lying valley through an avenue of tall neam trees.

There were about twenty houses on this summer estate. Each was a two-storied coral and plaster dwelling, with an open veranda running round the top floor. A low mud wall and a wicket gate divided the properties, each of which had its guard of sleepy-looking Arabs armed with rifles. We dismounted in front of the gateway, leaving our camels in charge of the guard. In contrast to the surrounding desert, the garden was like an illustration from the *Arabian Nights' Entertainment*. White and crimson roses flourished in pots on either side of the path, whilst masses of red and purple bougainvillea trailed over the veranda. There was even a small

[Dear Ras-al-Khaimah -- Amethyst]

29:Dunn S-4 (1952)1952 MI Middle East
Hadhramaut MM2
Oman MK1
Trucial Oman MK4
Qatar MK3
Kuwait MK1



a plateau. Except for a few oases the land is not cultivatable without the use of expensive irrigation facilities. The hills are not as high or as numerous and rainfall is not as heavy as in the areas to the west. The agriculture now consists mostly of grain and fruit crops and grazing. The half million people have not been able to subsist on the land, and they normally import substantial quantities of grain as well as staples against exports of fruits. No significant development is expected here in the near future.

## THE TRUCIAL COAST

The land area along the Arabian side of the Persian Gulf from the Oman Gulf to the Qatar Peninsula known as the Trucial Coast is owned by a group of independent sheiks who have various treaties with the United Kingdom giving the British virtual control over the area. This coastline is over 400 miles long, but the country is very hot, arid, and sparsely settled. Agriculture presently is negligible and opportunities for future development are thought to be extremely limited. The great hope is that oil will be found along this coast as it has been in adjacent areas.

## QATAR

Qatar, another sheikdom on the Persian Gulf which has a rather exclusive treaty with the British, is one of the oil kingdoms that has become immensely rich overnight. For this reason Qatar may become a thriving community but not an agricultural economy. The Qatar Peninsula is not very large (about 5 million acres) and is very hot, arid, sparsely settled, and, like the rest of the coast, not susceptible to any extensive agricultural development.

## KUWAIT

Kuwait, the other independent coastal area on the Persian Gulf under British protectorate, is another newly-rich oil community. In fact, this is one of the largest of the oil-producing areas. Proven reserves are thought to be half as large as proven reserves in the United States. Oil royalties ($200 million annually) are being used for many community development projects including some in the agricultural field. But the small arid area (5 million acres) and limited population preclude any extensive agricultural development.

### Table 48

ADEN PROTECTORATE: Acreage and Production of Principal Crops 1948 and 1949

| District and Crops | 1948 Acreage | 1948 Production | 1949 Acreage | 1949 Production |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Acres | Metric Tons | Acres | Metric Tons |
| West Aden | | | | |
| Millet and Sorghums | 40,000 | 12,000 | 42,000 | 12,000 |
| Other Small Millets | 10,000 | 1,500 | 9,500 | 1,900 |
| Wheat | 1,500 | 750 | 1,500 | 750 |
| Barley | 4,500 | 2,000 | 4,500 | 2,000 |
| Sesame | 10,000 | 1,000 | 8,500 | 800 |
| East Aden | | | | |
| Millet and Sorghums | 20,000 | 4,000 | 20,000 | 4,000 |
| Other Small Millets | 2,000 | 500 | 2,000 | 500 |
| Wheat | 2,500 | 2,500 | 2,000 | 2,500 |
| Dates | 10,000 | 5,500 | 10,000 | 5,500 |

SOURCE: Office of Foreign Agricultural Relations, United States Department of Agriculture.

185 311 Before he took his leave from Sharjah, he implored me to send him some catalogues of British firms giving details of agricultural machinery, as he was determined to experiment on his estates at Quwait and prove to his own satisfaction that the desert could be made to bloom. His own gardens at the Sheikh's Wells were alone an object lesson in vegetable growing under difficult climatic and soil conditions, and I believe that if he had been given a free hand in Oman the Arab population could have been made self-supporting. He could never understand why the British authorities would give no assistance to agricultural development, and insisted in exporting from India, even during the critical period of the war when transport was one of our greatest problems, cereals and other foods which could have been cultivated locally.

134 It must not be imagined that the growing of cereals and vegetables is an easy matter in Arabia. In Oman nine-tenths of the surface is composed of sand which, under analysis, reveals a 312 remarkable proportion of salt and acids. Much of the land is at sea level, or even below it, so that the well-water is salt and brackish and unfit for plants. Yet in the higher ground there is no limit to the number of wells which may be dug, provided suitable machinery is available. The subterranean water supply is limitless, being replenished during the heavy rains by streams and torrents which rush down from the mountains. Artesian wells which were drilled by the R.A.F. at Sharjah proved to the satisfaction of the engineers that even in the low-lying areas water can be found at economical depths.

312 241 A properly-controlled irrigation system would be a costly proposition at the outset, requiring extensive equipment and power units; but once it were installed, with a sufficiency of reservoirs to retain the supplies and modern pumping installations to ensure an adequate flow to canalized areas, one of the main difficulties of desert cultivation would have been overcome. Scientific treatment of the soil is another essential consideration, and from experiments which I undertook at Sharjah, with the advice of the Government of India's Agricultural Department in the Sind, I am confident that with proper treatment of the soil, both with chemicals and locally-produced manures, practically anything which grows in the sandy regions of northern India or Iraq, could be grown equally well in Oman.

241 In the small garden at the Fort I have grown cabbages and tomatoes as large and succulent as any which pass through Covent

2: O'Shea G-3 (1944-1945) 1947 MK4 Trucial Oman MK4



Garden, whilst in the gardens at the Sheikh's Wells, I have seen excellent radishes, beetroot, runner beans, onions, pumpkins, lettuce and several Indian varieties of vegetables. Pomegranates, figs and pomeloes, even melons, can be grown in suitable surroundings where there is sufficient shade, and in the mountain plains the Shi'hou tribes have cultivated wheat and barley for centuries. All this was achieved in a small area by means of systematic cultivation, proper treatment of the soil, and irrigation, and I see no reason why it cannot be similarly done throughout the Trucial Oman Coast, especially in the more fertile valleys and inland regions.

The effect of controlled agriculture would not only make the Arabs of Oman practically self-supporting, but it would produce a fundamental change in their lives; the illiterate and emaciated peasantry, which at present lives a hand-to-mouth existence and is forced to spend a bare subsistence wage on buying food exported from India, at prices manipulated by the merchants, would be in a position to own smallholdings and sell their produce under some approved co-operative system. The Arab is an excellent farmer and market-gardener, if he is given sufficient guidance and incentive, and, judging by the flourishing condition of the date plantations in Oman, I have little doubt that a scheme of general agriculture, if sponsored by the British Government, would enjoy equal success.

It is a dream of which one has scant hopes of fulfilment. Knowing the methods of the British Government in countries under mandate or protective control, it is extremely unlikely that anything will be done to improve the lot of the Arabs in Oman and make them economically secure. That our suzerainty imposes a great moral responsibility upon our shoulders does not seem to have smitten the official conscience, and the British public as a whole is so utterly ignorant of affairs in Arabia that it is not likely to concern itself with the plight of primitive tribes in Oman—a land of which eighty per cent of the population of the British Isles have most probably never heard. It is inconceivable that a government (and the word is not used in its political or party sense, but as indicative of the British Raj), which can allow its colonies in West Africa and other parts of the Empire to stagnate, withholding the financial aid which could make these territories flourishing and self-supporting centres of world trade, should exert itself on behalf of the Oman Arabs, particularly when there is little commercial advantage to be gained thereby.

It is unfortunate that this chapter should end on so pessimistic

travellers had declared did not exist in Oman. There was no road and the ground was hard and very bumpy, full of holes and nullahs. Tall grasses and shrubs grew in profusion, including *shinan* and the sea-green *harm* as well as some *Hadh* bushes, indicative of recent rain or heavy dews. The yellow flowers of the *zahr* blossomed in abundance, attracting myriads of insects, whilst several hares darted ahead of our truck and scurried away into their holes. The acacia (*samr*) trees grew in thin copses and were frequently fifteen feet high, which is unusual in this part of the desert.

When we had traversed five miles of this wooded country without so much as a trace of human life, our guides became nervous and begged to be allowed to return to Djaidh. We let them go, giving them a handful of biscuits and some tobacco as a gift, but before they left us they pointed to a site some two miles ahead where, they said, the *Badu* had last encamped. When we came upon this site we did, indeed, find the remains of a camp, the grass being lighter in patches than the surrounding herbage, whilst nearby was an old well and the dead embers of a fire. But of the *Badu* there was no sign.

We sat on a hillock for a few minutes, drinking tea, while Tandy and Williamson made a survey of the land; there were no tracks to guide us and nothing to indicate where the *Badu* might have concealed themselves. Sheikh Hamid, an amusing raconteur, recounted tales of the Beni Quitab tribe. These nomads number several thousand and, split into various sections, they roam all over the Oman country; branches of this tribe are to be found in the Nejd and Kuwait, but these have separate sheikhs and do not owe allegiance to Mohammed bin Ali. They are a wild, simple people, despising both the town dwellers and those who work with their hands. They live on dates, which they mostly steal, camels' milk, fish and rice. Some of these commodities they are obliged to buy, and the money for this purpose they obtain by selling camels, animal skins, including wolves, lizard and ibex; donkeys, wild honey, cheese and gazelle meat.

The Beni Quitab are famous camel breeders and during our trip across the *Marbakh* we saw large herds of these animals with their calves. They also breed donkeys, capturing the wild asses when young, and gather wild honey from the plains. Although they do as little work as possible, they cultivate small patches of ground to which they return twice a year, growing millet and tobacco, which they smoke in tiny pipes with cane stems.

133 offshore. The interior country in the north is hilly, with an average elevation of about 500 feet, but toward the southwest it becomes progressively flatter and more desolate. The portion from Abu Dhabi to Khor al Odaid is barren and virtually uninhabited.

132 The climate is particularly trying in the summer months from May to October, when temperatures of 115° F. and humidity readings of 90 to 98 per cent are frequently recorded. In contrast, the days from November to February are agreeably cool, while the nights often are cold. The rainfall is irregular, and normally approximates 4 to 5 inches a year. It is usually concentrated in sudden and violent storms during the mid-winter months.

## POPULATION AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

141 162 The population of Trucial Oman is not accurately known, but in 1951 it was estimated at about 80,000, including Bedouin 144 tribes totaling possibly 8,000. The settled inhabitants are of mixed racial stock. They are predominantly Arabs, but Negro admixtures, descendants of former slaves from Africa, and communities of Baluchis, Iranians and Indians are prominent. Except for 145 a few Hindus, the majority are Moslems. Most of the Arabs belong to the Wahhabi branch of the Sunni sect of Islam.

168 228 The chief occupations of the people are pearl diving, fishing, shipbuilding and date cultivation. Some of the best pearling reefs in the Persian Gulf are found off the Trucial Coast, and Dibai long has been recognized as the center of activity in the southern Gulf region. The industry has declined within recent years, but, in more favorable times, thousands of pearling vessels are said to have put out from Trucial Oman ports each season from early summer to November.

241 Agriculture is of secondary importance, being confined to areas in which water is available for irrigation. Date groves exist along the coast as far west as Abu Dhabi, and small amounts of millet, wheat, tobacco

244 and various vegetables are cultivated in the inland valleys. Cows, goats and other live-
233 stock are raised in the towns and the vil-
361 lages, but camels, goats and sheep are the mainstay of the Bedouin.

316 Ocher is mined on the offshore island of
471 Bu Musa, but no other mineral deposits of
135 commercial value are known to exist. The Petroleum Development (Trucial Coast) Ltd., a subsidiary of the Iraq Petroleum Company, holds concessions for the exploitation of the oil reserves of Trucial Oman, and is conducting exploratory operations in the area. The discovery of oil would undoubtedly have a revolutionary effect upon the economy and the standards of living of the people.

361 A large majority of the inhabitants dwell in the headquarters towns of the different sheikhdoms or in adjacent fishing or agricultural villages. Most of the towns are compact, with narrow, crooked streets, darkened by projecting balconies and matting canopies put up for protection from the sun. Dibai, the largest, is a walled town with an estimated population of over 20,000. Sharja, the second in size, is a settlement of 3,000 to 15,000 which is unwalled but surrounded by a fringe of palm thatch, or *barasti*, huts.
342 The homes of the wealthy merchants are of
361 two stories with wide balconies and spacious inner courts, but those of the poor are usually simple one- or two-room huts of mud brick or palm thatch. The Bedouin live in the traditional black goat's hair tents of the nomadic tribes. They move about with their herds, following fresh pastures in the winter and congregating around desert wells in the
361 summer. A few join the fishing or the pearl-
228 ing fleets during the summer season, while their families camp in the vicinity of the towns.

444 The nutritional habits of the people vary
571 with the racial, the social and the economic backgrounds of the diverse communities. Poverty and lack of adequate transportation facilities restrict the foodstuffs available to a large percentage of the population.
262 Dates, breads prepared from wheat or mil-

p. 312(6)

30: Gt. Britain G-5 (ca. 1918) 1920 MJ1 Saudi Arabia
Trucial Oman MK4



and Ghāfiri political factions (see Chap. VIII, p. 240), the former being Sunnis of the Maliki sect, the latter virtually Wahabis, though not of the militant order. Modern rifles are widely distributed both in town and country, but the traffic in arms has now been virtually suspended (cf. p. 247).

## Industries and Trade

The most important industry is pearl-diving, which in summer employs most of the able-bodied men with more than 1,200 boats; though during the winter some of the divers take part in the ordinary fisheries (the second great industry of the coast), the majority take their ease, retained by the pearl-boat owners and contractors, by whom they are supported through the slack season. Agriculture employs the settled population of the interior; vegetables are raised by irrigation from wells in most places, and dates are also grown, though they seldom fully ripen S. of Ras el-Kheimah. Cereals only succeed in a few favoured spots such as *Sīr* in the Shameiliyah district. The live stock of the villages consists of camels, donkeys, cattle, sheep, and goats; horses are rare. The Bedouins subsist chiefly by their herds. In winter, when there is pasture, they roam far and wide; in the hot weather they gather about the more abundant wells, such as those of the *Jiri* plain in the N., and *Beinūnah* in the W.

Pearls are the most valuable export, and are sent almost entirely to India from the port of Dibai. The oyster-shells from which the pearls are taken come next in importance; it is questioned whether the practice of selling these, instead of at once returning them to the sea, may not in the long run tend to exhaust the pearl-banks. Dried fish are exported from Abu Dhabi.

The imports in order of their value are: grain and pulse, from India and Persia; cotton piece-goods from India; dates and date-juice from 'Irāq; coffee, chiefly from India; sugar, from or through India, and miscellaneous provisions from Persia. The only steamship port is Dibai, but the other coastal towns are used by native sea-going boats running to and from India, Persia, and 'Irāq. Inland trade with the Bedouins is of no great volume, but Trucial Oman shares that of the Bireimi oasis with the Sultanate. The coast between Ras Musandam and Abu Dhabi was formerly used as a base by smugglers of arms, bringing rifles and ammunition from Sohār through Bireimi, and loading for Persia and El-Qatar either at the coastal towns, or at lonely spots between them. Within recent years it was necessary to warn the Sheikhs of 'Ajmān, Shārjah,